2: Barrett E-5 (no date) 1917 NT20 Washo NT20

These pine nuts may be cracked and eaten, but they are usually converted into a meal from which mush is made. They are shelled and ground to a fine flour on the boulder mortar, or sometimes on the metate. These implements are shown in plates III and IV. The meal is then cooked in a basket by means of hot stones, making a food similar to the acorn mush so typical of the California area.

As above mentioned, oaks grow in the extreme western part of the Washo area and acorns (ma'lil) were regularly gathered by the Washo in former times. Others were secured by them through trade with their western neighbors, who considered the piñon nut a delicacy as the Washo did the acorn, which was ground on the boulder mortar, as above described, and eaten in the form of mush.

A considerable variety of grass and weed seeds are used in a similar manner as food. They are parched, ground and made in the same way into mush. Pigweed seed (ta'hal), and another variety, called me'tsŭm, are still used. A native tea is made from the stems of a leafless, desert plant, called me'gel.

In cooking, especially in boiling mush as above indicated, a considerable number of stones about the size of one's fist are heated in the open fire. They are lifted by means of wooden tongs, and are first dipped into clear water to cleanse them of ashes. They are then dropped directly into the mush, which is thus made to boil and which is constantly stirred with a looped stirring stick (belĕ'yû), such as that shown in plate V, fig. 3. As the stones cool they are removed by means of this same implement, again dipped into water to remove the remnants of the mush which may adhere to them, and replaced in the fire to re-heat.

IMPLEMENTS OF STONE.

The Washo use the flat metate or grinding stone (dĕ'mge), and the muller (ga'mûm), as do the Paiute and other Great Basin and Southwest desert tribes. These implements are shown in Plate IV, figs 5 and 4, respectively. The top of a conveniently situated, flat

[see cat. 116, pp. 334 35. – Ed.]

[P. 366, B]

MYTHOLOGY

776 . Two distinct attitudes about these creatures are displayed by the Washo. Most informants openly admitted being afraid of Water Babies. If they heard one they remained in their houses or attempted to avoid contact. They claimed that if a person saw a Water Baby by accident, at the very least he would be struck unconscious and greater harm, in the form of sickness, might be inflicted on him or on one of his relatives. The general attitude was that Water Babies were best left alone because they were extremely powerful.

776 115 This attitude is perhaps summed up best by one of my informants, a rather sophisticated Washo who has lived in cities for long periods and who is an active leader in the tribe's legal battle with the federal government. He is also a devoted peyotist who often conducts curing ceremonies and is conceded to have a curing power. He said, "If they ever get up a bunch to trap one of them [Water Babies], I don't want to have nothing to do with it." When I asked why not, he replied: "Why hell, if you make one of them things mad they'll flood the world. I just don't want nothing to do with them. I ain't that desperate." I asked, "desperate for what?" and he replied "for power. I like to dream about womens [sic] and things like that, not about Water Babies and that funny stuff."

[795] [756] [787]

776 756 115 This last statement clearly indicates the other attitude about Water Babies; they are often guardian spirits of Washo who have special power, particularly shamanistic curing power. Another informant expressed this other attitude about these creatures. He is about seventy, attended Stewart Indian School for ten years and lived among the Hopi for ten years. He boasts a stone and cement-block home, the only such dwelling owned by a Washo. He has learned to bead baskets and during most of the year earns a reasonable income from this. His seeming adjustment to white culture is confounded when his philosophic position is examined. He can only be termed a mystic who interprets the world in Indian terms. Exposure to such influences as the writings of Kroeber and Huxley has only confirmed his essentially Indian viewpoint. Both his parents were famous Indian doctors and his maternal uncle, who was also his mentor,[2] was a famous shaman. My informant implied that his uncle's spirit (wegeleyo), from which his power was derived, was the Water Baby, and his own carefully guarded statement implied that the creature was potentially his own spirit. His view of the Water Baby was quite the reverse of other informants. "Some people think the Water Baby will hurt them, but he won't. If they see him by accident he won't do nothing. But if he has given you his power and you see him—then wham, he maybe knock you right down." This appears to have been his way of describing a seizure by the Water Baby, which although a fearful experience, usually resulted in the gift of additional power. There was, how-

[342] [177] [434] [177]

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[2] This statement should not be considered as an indication of matrilineality in Washo society. Freed and d'Azevedo, who have done extensive work in kinship and social organization of this group, seemed to agree that the Washo were loosely bilateral with certain formalized patrilineal elements. However, because of fragile marriages, many Washo have had a longer and closer association with their mothers' families than with their fathers', or with those of any of their mothers' subsequent husbands.

other Indians rather late. The Washo never kept horses until sometime after 1850. In 1844 the Fremont party (Nevins 1956, 348) put a Washo on a horse and "enjoyed the unusual sight of an Indian who could not ride. He could not even guide the animal, and appeared to have no knowledge of horses." Fremont was given a Washo guide, a boy they called Melo (meaning "friend"), who was selected because he had seen Whites. Later on in the same year Hamilton's trapping party met Paiutes on the Carson River that had a few horses, understood a little Spanish, and had a few Spanish flintlock guns (Sieber 1951, 155-6).

In 1852 a band of Washo were reported in the possession of several American horses near Eagle Station (Thompson and West 1881, 147) while Major G. W. Ingalls (1913, 26) wrote that the Washo had no horses in 1859. Lowie (1939, 302) collected the following story about Washo contact with Whites.

"According to Dave, the first whites from the East reached the site of Wadsworth in the fall of the year on their way to California, driving mule, ox, or horse teams. There were many of them, and they did not halt. Women were in the emigrant wagon. One ox got away and was tended by the Indians, who rode and packed him, finally killing him for the meat, which they divided among the band."

In the late 1800's sweeping changes of the natural and social scene were wrought by mining, lumbering, farming, grazing, commercial fishing, tourism, and the growth of towns. By 1900 the Washo were culturally "reservation Indians," but without a reservation or a treaty with the U.S. Government. They had been alloted about 64,000 acres of land in the Pine Nut Hills as a pinenut reserve. In addition, about 30 Washo families each received trust lands in California, especially in Alpine County, under the General Allotment Act of 1887 and other later acts. The usual size for these "Indian homesteads" was 80 acres. These lands in California totaled 2,600 acres in 1945.

In 1917 the site of the Dresslerville Colony was obtained and in 1938 and 1940 three ranches were purchased adjacent to the colony for the Washo. The ranches were run by the Washo for several years. Political troubles within the tribe forced them to lease to White ranchers. In addition, the Carson Colony of 160 acres was purchased for the Washo in 1940 (Realty Office, Carson Indian Agency).

Today Washo income comes mainly from wage work along with some rentals, social security, relief, and craftwork. Most of the wage work of the Washo living in Dresslerville and Woodfords is connected with farm and ranch work. With 100 years of association with Nevada ranch life, many Washo Indians are skilled ranch hands. However, none of the Washo own sizable farms or ranches today. With military service and World War II defense plant experience a number of Washo, particularly those residing in Carson City and Reno, have moved into skilled trades.

In 1942 the average annual income of 40 families at the Dresslerville Colony was $664 (Program of the Carson Agency 1944, 184). Incomes have since increased substantially above the 1942 figure. For example, in the summer of 1961 there were three electricians and a painter that commuted from Dresslerville to Reno every work day.

Washo reside today primarily in small shacks in Dresslerville, Carson City, and Reno, Nevada and in Woodfords and Coleville, California. A large number of Washo have married out of the tribe and live in the communities mentioned above or in other parts of Nevada and California.

The general figures on the causes of deaths among Nevada Indians is probably indicative of certain elements in current Washo life (Haglund, et al. 1961, 43-43c). Non-Indians in Nevada have a higher frequency of deaths due to heart diseases and cancer while the Indians have higher death rates in the categories of violence, vehicle accidents, pneumonia, enteritis, tuberculosis, homicide, and suicide. "In the general accident category... Nevada Indian deaths are almost twice the proportion of that of non-Indians in this state. Homicide as a cause of death is five times greater among Nevada Indians than among Indians in other parts of the continental United States."

The following chronology is presented to give an overview of the important events in the history of Washo territory. Several of the events listed have not been settled by historians and may be only approximately correct as stated here. There is little of an ethnohistorical character to this outline, but it does provide a framework for relating changes in Washo economics to the facts of White contact.

1826 - (possibly 1825) Jedediah S. Smith brought a party of some forty trappers down the Humboldt, to the Walker River, and over Walker's Pass into California. In the same year he recrossed the Sierras passing Mono Lake on the way east (Thompson and West 1881).

1833 - Capt. B. L. E. Bonneville sent a trapping (and spying?) party under Joseph R. Walker into Spanish California by way of Pyramid Lake, up the Truckee River, and over the Sierras. Zenas Leonard wrote a diary of this trip (Nevada 1940, 289).

1841 - Capt. J. B. Bartleson took an emigrant party, with John Bidwell and Col. Joseph B. Chiles along, to the Carson and Walker rivers and over the Sierras into California by way of Sonora Pass (Nevada 1940, 289).

1844 - Col. John C. Fremont and his survey party, with Kit Carson along, passed Pyramid Lake, proceeded south through Carson Valley and on

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In spite of the moderate number of hold-overs from the old economic system, the economic base of modern Washo life has changed considerably since the 1850's. Today, the Washo live primarily through wage work on surrounding ranches and in the towns. The men are mainly unskilled laborers, although a few have trades and earn a good living. One man has grown wealthy in the lumber business. Women work as domestic servants, as dishwashers in restaurants, or in laundries. But women do not work unless they must, and they spend most of their time at home caring for their families. Most of the aboriginal survivals are in the female sphere of activity, for women can add considerably to the family income by preparing pine-nut and acorn flour and by weaving baskets for sale. The older people have pensions or receive social security payments and are economically independent of their children. Washo material culture is entirely American except for the items mentioned above and a few others. They now live in permanent settlements resembling small, American towns. The largest of these, Dresslerville, Nevada, has a population of 195. This is far larger than the number of individuals who lived together in prewhite settlements.

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CEREMONIES OF THE LIFE CYCLE

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A number of practices were formerly associated with childbirth. The mother ate no meat or salt for a month after the birth; the father observed the same taboos until the baby's umbilical cord fell off; and until the loss of the cord, husband and wife were forbidden sexual intercourse. Ceremonies involving the distribution of gifts marked the return of the father and mother to normal life, the former when the infant lost its umbilical cord and the latter a month after the birth.

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Most of the customs surrounding birth are no longer observed. Some women still observe the food taboos; but if they have their babies in the government hospital, they generally eat meat when it is served. Often the doctors and nurses insist upon it. The men have given up all their previous observances. The custom of distributing presents following the birth of a baby is still maintained. It usually takes place two weeks after the birth and seems to be a merging of two aboriginal ceremonies: the one at the time of the detachment of the umbilical cord, and the second, when the mother is freed of all restrictions a month after the birth. The modern ceremony is called the "baby feast."

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The girl's puberty rite or "dance," as the Washo call it, was the most elaborate of all the ceremonies of the life cycle. It lasted four days, and the Washo say that during this period the girl was "shaping her life." The principal features of the ceremony were: (1) the girl fasted four days and abstained from meat and fish for one month; (2) she worked very hard so as not to be lazy in later life; (3) on the fourth night, the girl climbed a mountain where she lit four fires; (4) she then raced a nonrelative back to the foot of the mountain, care being taken that she always won the race; (5) the girl danced until dawn on the fourth night of the ceremony and was then bathed. The entire ceremony was repeated when the girl had her second menses.

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The puberty ceremony for girls is still held. In my interviewing, I have found very few women who had not had a "dance." Each woman who had not had a

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8: Merriam& d'Azevedo E-4, 5 (1954-1955) 1957
NT20 Washo NT20

Washo Peyote Songs

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I

The Washo

THE Washo people of Nevada and California have been described linguistically as a small Hokan-speaking group among the Shoshonean-speaking peoples of the Great Basin (Kroeber 1907; Lowie 1939). They formerly inhabited a relatively abundant territory extending from Honey Lake in the north to Antelope Valley and Sonora Pass in the south, and from the Pinenut Range east of Carson Valley in Nevada to Lake Tahoe and the summit of the Sierra-Nevada Mountains of California in the west. Present population is variously reported at between 400 and 1000 individuals; the figures on file at the Nevada Indian Agency in Stewart, Nevada, support the larger estimates.

The Washo were formerly distributed in small, band-like communities composed of semi-exogamous extended families which made use of the full range of their diversified setting in hunting and gathering, and were thus a highly mobile population. In recent times, however, there has been an increasing tendency to cluster in small colonies in or near the older white settlements of Nevada and California, and on the few remaining allotment acres provided by the government many years ago. The major source of money-income for families is provided by those members who are employed as laborers on road-construction gangs, ranches, and farms. A few women work as servants in the towns and resorts. There is little use of the land for agricultural purposes, while hunting, fishing, and gathering still provide an important part of subsistence. Despite the often drastic conditions of acculturation during the past one hundred years, the Washo have maintained considerable homogeneity as an ethnic and cultural minority.

The Peyotists

Peyotism among the Washo is scarcely more than twenty years old, having been introduced by one Ben Lancaster, a member of the tribe who had learned the ritual and ideology during a long sojourn among eastern and southern tribes. In 1936 he started the proselyting which resulted in the creation of an enthusiastic group of Washo and Paiute adherents during the period 1936–39. By 1940, however, the movement had already become defunct, and meetings were no longer held in Washo territory. Ben Lancaster continued to preside over the embittered and secretive remnants of the cult, which consisted of a handful of loyal Paiute and a very few Washo members. He also erected an

14:Stewart E-5 (1936-1938)1944 NR13 Northern Paiute NR13
Washo NT20

his car was fruitlessly searched three times by the California border patrol. At least a dozen persons claim definite knowledge that Ben added marihuana to the cigarettes he gave in meetings. Lane Dixon (P,1), a graduate of the Nevada Reform School, who has served several short jail sentences and locally is known to be a congenital liar, was informer for the Federal officers. He assured me, also, that marihuana was used because he had smoked marihuana cigarettes and felt the same sensations others described experiencing from eating peyote.[a] The basis for this accusation is Ben's practice of mixing a "white powder" in prayer cigarettes and burning those cigarettes after meeting ("to destroy the evidence"). Ben put some in my prayer cigarette and afterward gave me a sample from his large supply. It was a type of sage leaf chopped fine.

Federal authorities also suspect that Spanish fly (cantharides) has at times been given to girls in peyote meetings. Since I could obtain no real evidence of any display of sexual excitement during or following meetings, and since Lane Dixon is the principal source for the story, I doubt the charge.

The desire for prestige, or the fear of losing it, motivates Washo and Paiute reactions toward peyotism. Members seemed to enjoy vicariously some of the honor and position of their leader. Ben talked with Commissioner Collier (November, 1937), he spoke before the Minden Rotary Club (October, 1937), he prepared an attractive peyote exhibit for the Carson Valley Day Fair.[b] On the other hand, Hank Pete, self-styled chief of the Washo, naturally protests against submission to the rules of the peyote ceremony and to the authority of Ben Lancaster, feeling it detracts from his own prestige. Another nonmember argues, "The President of the United States and the white people in this valley don't use peyote." Shamans probably fear the loss of both money and honor, and, therefore, in the main oppose peyote, notable exceptions being Joe Green, Tom Mitchell, and Sam Dick.

Arguments for and against peyotism have been based on economic grounds. Ben's insistence that contributions are free-will offerings seems to have attracted a few who consider a peyote meeting cheaper than, yet equal to, a shamanistic treatment for which a price, from $2.50 to $5.00 a night, is fixed and paid in advance. The willingness of peyotists to donate liberally probably results from their having been conditioned to paying their shamans well, a practice which still continues, especially among the Washo. Having given up liquor, several reiterate that in spite of traveling expenses and contributions they have more money than formerly for food, clothing, shelter. Don James epigrammatized: "A dime now goes as far as a dollar used to." Several peyotists have recently purchased automobiles. A few may imagine economic gain by picturing themselves replacing Ben Lancaster. However, in his meetings, Sam Dick, the most likely successor, hardly collects expenses. Perhaps some of the Indians wish to associate with the influential Jameses and Arnots, who might provide them with jobs.

Economic objections to peyote, such as that Ben gets too much money, that the Indians should use their money for better purposes, and so on, are mainly rationalizations because the Washo-Paiute are typically unconcerned about their fellow man's economic condition, even when, as often happens, their poorer kinfolk move in

[a] From Bromberg's (1939, 4-12) review of the reactions caused by marihuana, which are increased motor activity, mental confusion, talkativeness, increased desire for alcohol, and sexual excitement, it is clear that marihuana and peyote produce opposite effects. Also, see Lundquist, 1939, 2, for the Schurz missionary report of the use of marihuana with peyote by Nevada Indians at a "National Fellowship of Indian Workers." Rev. G. E. E. Lundquist, who visited Schurz in 1938, heard Lane Dixon confirm the story.

[b] Sam Dick spoke and had peyotists sing at the Fair in 1939 (personal communication from Miss Grace Dangberg of Minden).

14:Stewart E-5 (1936-1938)1944 NR13 Northern Paiute NR13
Washo NT20

with them. Nonetheless, 30 informants are averse to peyotism on grounds that Ben is "robbing the Indians."

A significant economic argument against peyotism is neglect of farms and cattle and lost employment because of excessive devotion to religion. In the first months of Ben's proselyting, from two to four meetings were often held on as many consecutive nights and fanaticism kept some away from their responsibilities.

Members say that shamans and gambling-house proprietors probably dislike the cult because it takes away some of their clientele.[a] Two who temporarily joined the peyote religion were known to be hypochondriacs, one a steady customer of shamans, the other a frequent inmate of the hospital. Gamblers would be expected to resist a religion which held all-night meetings on Saturday nights. Moreover, it is suggested that bootleggers instigated some antagonism.

Kinship, friendship, and the satisfaction derived from a sociable in-group were also important factors contributing to the spread and growth of peyotism.[b] Just as real or assumed blood relationship and friendship facilitated Ben's introduction of the cult, family ties were important in increasing and holding members. An examination of the list in Appendix IV shows that most active peyotists have kinsfolk in the cult. However, this list also shows enough close relatives of members to be apostates or actively opposed to void any generalization that kinship wholly determines participation. Although only a few designate the pleasure of singing and meeting together as a reason for attendance, the enthusiastic preparation of gourd rattles, fans, etc., and the almost nightly singing practices indicate that the desire for social contact helps to convert and hold the Indians to peyotism.[c]

The basis for arguments of both peyotists and nonpeyotists is unverified opinion, wishful thinking, conscious or unconscious distortion of facts. Because of one or two apparently miraculous recoveries members attribute to peyote the power to cure all illness. Desiring to get well or to have their friends or families healed, they are prepared to accept excuses for failures. Opponents, on the other hand, blame peyote for the few deaths which followed attendance at rituals, maintaining peyote is a poison and that all users meet untimely ends. Opponents insist that peyotism is not a religion at all, but a congregation of narcotic addicts disguising their true purpose in order to avoid legal interference. To the members, however, peyotism is a religion, and it is extremely difficult, when listening to their prayers, to doubt their complete sincerity. So the argument swings on each point. Each side has as much truth as the other. Through associations and chance, these people choose what to believe.

DISCUSSION OF DIFFUSION

Whenever the diffusion of native religions has been studied, two theories, singly or combined, have been used to explain the phenomenon. The first, the cultural compatibility theory, postulates that new institutions will be acceptable to a people

[a] Parsons' account (pp. 67–68, 118–119) of opposition to peyote at Taos shows similar motivation: "The practice of . . . the outstanding shaman of the town is interfered with by peyote doctoring. I surmise that it was not until Porfirio realized the danger of this competition that the active opposition to the cult developed."

[b] Kinship and friendship facilitated the diffusion of the 1870 Ghost Dance, as well as the peyote cult. Du Bois reports (p. 135) intertribal marriages precipitated the transmission of the 1870 Dance from Shasta to Karok, Yurok to Tolowa to Tututni. Friendship aided a California Shasta proselyting related Shasta and other tribes on the Siletz and Grand Ronde reservations in Oregon. La Barre reports (pp. 112, 116) that "marital ties have often . . . been the source of the spread of peyote"; the first Comanche user learned of peyote when he married an Apache woman; Rave's first converts were his Winnebago relatives; a Modoc in Oklahoma became a peyotist through marriage to a Quapaw.

[c] La Barre states (p. 59) that "the primary reason for Northern Cheyenne meetings is social."